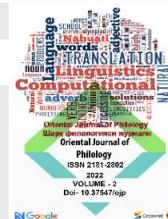


Oriental Journal of Philology**ORIENTAL JOURNAL OF PHILOLOGY**

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<http://www.supportscience.uz/index.php/ojp/about>**ETHICAL LITERARY CRITICISM AND THE MORAL STRUCTURE OF TEXTS****Timur Makhsetbaevich Genjebaev***Assistant, Department of Russian Language and Literature**Karakalpak State University named after Berdakh*genjebaev.timur@gmail.com*Nukus, Karakalpakstan***ABOUT ARTICLE**

Key words: ethical literary criticism, development, human civilization, literature, moral experiences.

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Abstract: This article examines ethical literary criticism as a theoretical approach to the interpretation and analysis of literary texts from an ethical and moral perspective. It argues that literature should be understood not only as an art of language but also as an art of text that records human moral experiences within specific historical and cultural contexts. Drawing on ethical literary criticism, the study examines how literary works embody ethical structures and ethical lines that reflect humanity's evolving moral consciousness. Particular attention is given to the distinction between written literature and oral literature, conceptualized as "brain text," which exists in human memory prior to material inscription. The article further discusses how the material existence of literature relies on written context, while its ethical significance is shaped by cultural conditions and historical circumstances. By emphasizing the dynamic relationship between ethics, text, and context, this research demonstrates that the definition of literature is not fixed but continually reconstructed in response to social, moral, and cultural transformations.

AXLOQIY ADABIY TANQID VA MATNLARNING AXLOQIY TUZILISHI**Timur Makhsetbaevich Genjebaev***Berdax nomidagi Qoraqalpoq Davlat Universiteti,**Rus tili va adabiyoti kafedrasi assistenti*genjebaev.timur@gmail.com*Nukus, Qoraqalpog'iston*

МАҚОЛА HAQIDA

Kalit so'zlar: axloqiy adabiy tanqid, rivojlanish, insoniyat sivilizatsiyasi, adabiyot, ma'naviy tajribalar.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola adabiy matnlarni axloqiy va ma'naviy nuqtai nazardan talqin va tahlil qilish uchun nazariy yondashuv sifatida axloqiy adabiy tanqidni o'rganadi. Unda adabiyot nafaqat til san'ati, balki insonning ma'naviy tajribasini ma'lum tarixiy va madaniy kontekstlarda qayd etuvchi matn san'ati sifatida ham tushunilishi kerakligi ta'kidlanadi. Axloqiy adabiy tanqidga tayanib, tadqiqot adabiy asarlar insoniyatning rivojlanayotgan axloqiy ongini aks ettiruvchi axloqiy tuzilmalar va axloqiy yo'llarni qanday ifodalashini o'rganadi. Maxsus e'tibor yozma adabiyot va og'zaki adabiyot o'rtasidagi farqga qaratiladi, bu «miya matni» sifatida kontseptualizatsiya qilingan bo'lib, u moddiy yozuvdan oldin inson xotirasida mavjud bo'ladi. Maqolada shuningdek, adabiyotning moddiy mavjudligi yozma kontekstga bog'liq ekanligi, uning axloqiy ahamiyati esa madaniy sharoitlar va tarixiy vaziyatlar tomonidan shakllantirilishi muhokama qilinadi. Axloq, matn va kontekst o'rtasidagi dinamik munosabatni ta'kidlash orqali tadqiqot adabiyot ta'rifining qat'iy emas, balki ijtimoiy, axloqiy va madaniy o'zgarishlarga javoban doimiy ravishda qayta qurilishini ko'rsatadi.

**ЭТИЧЕСКАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРНАЯ КРИТИКА И МОРАЛЬНАЯ СТРУКТУРА
ТЕКСТОВ**

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О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова: литературная критика, человеческая цивилизация, моральный опыт.

Аннотация: Эта статья рассматривает этическую литературную критику как теоретический подход к интерпретации и анализу литературных текстов с этической и моральной точки зрения. В ней утверждается, что литературу следует понимать не только как искусство языка, но и как искусство текста, фиксирующего человеческий моральный опыт в определённых исторических и культурных контекстах. Опираясь на этическую литературную критику, исследование

изучает, как литературные произведения воплощают этические структуры и линии, отражающие эволюцию морального сознания человечества. Особое внимание уделяется различию между письменной и устной литературой, концептуализированной как «текст мозга», который существует в человеческой памяти до материальной записи. Статья также обсуждает, как материальное существование литературы зависит от письменного контекста, тогда как её этическое значение формируется культурными условиями и историческими обстоятельствами. Подчеркивая динамическое взаимодействие этики, текста и контекста, исследование показывает, что определение литературы не является фиксированным, а постоянно реконструируется в ответ на социальные, моральные и культурные трансформации.

Introduction. From the standpoint of the historical development of human civilization, literature is inseparable from history and functions as a reflection of it. Literary works emerge within specific historical periods and are shaped by distinct ethical frameworks. Consequently, a fundamental prerequisite for literary interpretation is an understanding of a text within the ethical environment and moral context of its own time. Literature should not be interpreted solely according to contemporary ethical standards, as doing so may lead to ethical contradictions in literary judgment. Works that conformed to the moral values of their original historical context do not necessarily align with present-day ethical norms. In some cases, literary texts once rejected in their own era may later be re-evaluated and appreciated, while others previously celebrated may lose ethical legitimacy over time. Ethical literary criticism, therefore, seeks to analyze literature from a developmental historical perspective, interpreting texts from different periods within their respective ethical contexts in order to bridge interpretive gaps created by changing moral conditions.

Ethical literary criticism primarily focuses on the interpretation of literary texts, asserting that most literary works document human moral experience. Such texts are composed of ethical structures or “ethical lines,” which connect various “ethical knots” to form the core ethical framework of a narrative. The complexity of a literary work depends on both the number of ethical knots it contains and the difficulty involved in resolving them. Accordingly, the central task of

ethical literary criticism is to reveal, through close textual analysis, how ethical knots are formed into ethical lines or how these knots may be untangled within the narrative.

In many cases, differing processes of forming or resolving ethical knots result in multiple interpretations of the same text. At times, an ethical knot is presupposed rather than explicitly depicted. For instance, in Homer's *Iliad*, the abduction of Helen by Paris serves as an assumed ethical catalyst for subsequent conflicts, even though it is not directly dramatized but recounted through characters' speeches. Similarly, in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the prophecy that Oedipus will kill his father and marry his mother functions as a presupposed ethical knot. In other instances, ethical knots arise during the narrative's development. In *Hamlet*, Gertrude's marriage to Claudius creates an ethical taboo that complicates Hamlet's pursuit of revenge, profoundly influencing his thoughts and actions. Some literary works depict ethical knots through ethical disorder or the reconstruction of moral systems, such as Viola's disguise in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* or Anna's rejection of traditional morality and reconfiguration of ethical values in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Analyzing such ethical knots through ethical literary criticism enables a deeper and more nuanced understanding of literary texts.

Compared with other critical approaches, ethical literary criticism emphasizes objective ethical analysis rather than abstract moral judgment. It is primarily interpretative in nature, aiming to clarify ethical dimensions and social phenomena represented in literature rather than to impose moral evaluations. This approach requires critics to situate themselves within the historical context of the literary work and to empathize with characters as agents shaped by their specific circumstances. In this sense, the critic assumes a role akin to that of a defense advocate for the character [1]. For example, in *Hamlet*, readers may fail to recognize the legitimacy of Hamlet's actions unless they adopt his perspective. Viewed in this way, Hamlet's hesitation does not stem from personal weakness but from his inability to resolve a profound ethical dilemma: avenging his father would involve violating serious moral taboos, while refraining from revenge would mean abandoning his moral duty and filial responsibility.

Literature review. Literature is a historically contingent concept whose meaning has shifted in response to changes over time. The categorization of literary texts according to different criteria therefore produces varying results. By examining works that were recognized as literature in different historical periods through the lens of fiction and fact, it becomes possible to gain a clearer understanding of the development of literary ideas. In seventeenth-century Britain, literature encompassed not only the works of figures such as William Shakespeare, John Webster, John Donne, Andrew Marvell, and John Milton, but also Francis Bacon's essays, John Donne's sermons, and John Bunyan's spiritual autobiography. As noted by Eagleton, works such as Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and Edward Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*

were likewise regarded as literature. During the nineteenth century, the writings of Charles Lamb, Thomas Macaulay, and John Stuart Mill continued to be classified as literary, whereas the works of Jeremy Bentham, Charles Darwin, and Herbert Spencer were excluded from this category [2]. Such distinctions illustrate how definitions of literature have varied across historical contexts.

In classical Greece, Plato did not articulate a concept of literature as understood today; instead, he employed the terms *poiesis* and *poetics*. *Poiesis*, meaning poetry, broadly corresponds to the modern notion of literature, while *poetics* refers to the study of poetry. As a result, poetry and *poetics* constituted the foundational concepts in early literary theory. René Wellek observes that the terms *littérature*, *letteratura*, and *Literatur* have replaced “poetry” only within the last two centuries. In English, however, the term “literature” first appeared in the fourteenth century. From the late Middle Ages through the nineteenth century, it primarily denoted an individual’s intellectual attainment. In Samuel Johnson’s *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), literature was defined as book learning [4]. In modern English dictionaries, by contrast, the term carries a wider range of meanings.

Discussion. From the perspective of ethical literary criticism, the view that “literature is a form of social ideology” does not adequately explain the essence of literature. Ideology denotes abstract thought and therefore represents only the meaning derived from literature rather than its defining nature. Within the interconnected system of thought, language, words, text, and literature, thought remains abstract and may exist as mental text, which is then expressed through language. Language and words, however, do not constitute literature in themselves; rather, they function as prerequisites for its creation. Literature comes into being only when thought and language are transformed into written texts. Accordingly, literature should be understood as a literary text, and because texts possess a concrete form, literature has a material existence.

Words serve as carriers of meaning and as the basic components of texts. Texts, in turn, function as the medium of literature and give rise to various literary genres, including poetry, drama, and the novel. Since words convey meaning with relative clarity, readers are able to comprehend texts through the interpretation of linguistic signs. In this respect, reading literature essentially involves reading texts composed of letters and words [3].

Words operate as instruments for recording, writing, and preserving language and thought. One of their primary functions is to document language, ideas, and events in textual form. Literary creation therefore depends on written characters as tools for transforming abstract ideology into concrete literary texts. Literary writing can thus be understood as the process by which authors arrange letters and words into structured texts. The diversity of letters and their multiple meanings contributes to the variety of literary forms, ensuring the vitality and lasting significance of literature as a source of intellectual and spiritual nourishment.

There is no fixed limit to the length of literary texts, and in principle, any written expression that records events or conveys thought may be considered literature. Consequently, literary texts may range from brief inscriptions to works consisting of thousands or even millions of words, provided they communicate meaning clearly. In the early stages of writing, texts were relatively simple and brief, as they were unable to record complex events or ideas. Even before the emergence of established literary genres such as poetry, drama, and the novel, texts composed of written words could already be regarded as literature. Prior to the differentiation of literary forms, all readable texts—whether concerned with religious practices or everyday life and regardless of length—may be considered early literature. Examples include Chinese oracle bone inscriptions dating back over three thousand years, Egyptian hieroglyphs inscribed on tombstones or papyrus, and ancient Sumerian cuneiform carvings on stone and clay tablets, all of which represent some of the earliest manifestations of literature.

Before the advent of digital technology, literature existed primarily in the form of written texts composed of characters. Ideographic texts, as the foundational material forms of literature, were created through various symbolic combinations carved or written on materials such as stone, clay tablets, turtle shells, animal bones, papyrus, and bamboo slips. At the time these texts were produced, the modern concept of literature had not yet emerged; therefore, they can be regarded as literature regardless of whether they would later be classified as literary, historical, philosophical, or scientific works. As human cognition developed, new understandings of written texts emerged, along with new criteria and conceptual frameworks. Texts valued for their educational and aesthetic qualities were gradually identified as literary and distinguished from other forms of writing. Genres such as poetry, essays, narratives, and drama came to be recognized as literature, while texts lacking such literary qualities were categorized as philosophical, historical, or scientific. Once the concept of literary texts was established, the notion of literature itself gained widespread acceptance.

Similarly, in ancient Greece, early literary ideas were initially confined to poetry and later expanded to include drama, philosophy, and history. With the emergence of modern literary thought, philosophy and history were separated from literature and established as independent disciplines. Although philosophical and historical works remain closely related to literature, classifying them as literary texts today would contradict prevailing modern literary concepts. Thus, divergent literary ideas give rise to differing literary concepts and classifications. Moreover, literary forms vary across historical periods. As Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) wryly observed, “art is what everybody knows it to be” (Croce 1), underscoring the subjectivity inherent in aesthetic understanding. Literature has been variously defined as the expression of emotion, the imitation or representation of reality, a linguistic construct, the embodiment of intuition and instinctive

desire, an artistic symbol, or a form of social ideology. These differing perspectives demonstrate the impossibility of achieving a universal consensus on the definition of literature. Across historical eras, changing literary forms have been accompanied by evolving literary ideas, which in turn have produced diverse literary concepts and definitions of literature [2].

Conclusion. Thus, literary ideas are articulated through literary concepts, which have developed unevenly across different cultural and historical contexts. Because these ideas did not emerge simultaneously on a global scale, there has never been a uniform understanding of literature. For instance, prior to the formal establishment of literary concepts in ancient China, the integrated view of literature, history, and philosophy was already widely accepted. As a result, ancient Chinese literature encompassed not only shi, ci, ge, and fu—the four major poetic forms—but also philosophical writings and historical records. Judged by modern classificatory standards, such works would be excluded from literature, a practice that would significantly diminish the richness of the ancient Chinese literary heritage.

In conclusion, ethical literary criticism provides a comprehensive framework for understanding literature as both an artistic and ethical practice shaped by specific historical, cultural, and contextual conditions. By emphasizing that literary texts record human moral experiences and embody ethical structures, this approach moves beyond purely aesthetic or linguistic analysis and highlights literature's role in reflecting, questioning, and constructing moral values. The distinction between written texts and oral or "brain texts" further expands the scope of literary study, acknowledging diverse modes of literary existence while affirming the foundational importance of written context. Ultimately, this study underscores that the definition and interpretation of literature are not fixed but continuously evolving, determined by the ethical concerns, cultural traditions, and intellectual contexts from which literary works emerge. Ethical literary criticism, therefore, offers a valuable lens for reexamining literature as a dynamic intersection of language, text, morality, and human experience.

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